

Message Text

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60

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 L-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4737

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, HO, PE

SUBJECT: SECRET PAYMENTS BY UNITED BRANDS TO HONDURAN OFFICIALS

REF: STATE 079302, LIMA 2980

1. EL COMERCIO OF APRIL 14 HAS AN ARTICLE CLAIMING THERE HAD BEEN "INDIGNATION" IN HONDURAS OVER THE "ACTION OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN ACCUSING PRESIDENT LOPEZ OF RECEIVING \$1.25 MILLION FROM UNITED BRANDS" TO REDUCE BANANA TAXES AGREED TO BY THE UNION OF BANANA EXPORTING COUNTRIES (UPEB).

2. THE ARTICLE CONTINUES THAT THE U.S. ACCUSATION REMINDS ONE OF ANOTHER ATTITUDE A FEW MONTHS AGO WHEN WASHINGTON PAID \$22 MILLION TO EXXON FOR IPC "VIOLATING ITS AGREEMENT WITH PERU." IN BOTH CASES AN EFFORT WAS MADE TO "DISCREDIT THE GOVERNMENTS THAT HAVE AFFECTED OLIGARCHIC AND IMPERIALIST INTERESTS." THE U.S. DECLARATION COMES AT A TIME WHEN HONDURAN GOVERNMENT IS STUDYING THE EXPROPRIATION OF 12,000 HECTARES OWNED BY UNITED BRANDS. "THE NEW HONDURAN ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT WILL NO DOUBT BE SHOWERED WITH NEW FOREIGN ATTACKS," THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES.

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3. COMMENT: THE EL COMERCIO ARTICLE ON THE UNITED BRANDS AFFAIR
IS THE FIRST TO APPEAR
IN THE PRESS HERE SINCE APRIL 10 (LIMA REFTTEL) AND
ITS TONE IS RELATIVELY MILD. GIVEN THE "IMPERIALIST" ISSUE, ONE
WONDERS WHY THE PRESS HAS NOT YET ENGAGED IN AN ALL-OUT EDITORIAL
ASSAULT. POSSIBILITIES INCLUDE: (1) SIMPLY A SLOW PRESS REACTION
THAT WILL PICK UP IN THE NEAR FUTURE OR AS THE OCCASION OR NEED
ARISES, (2) A RELUCTANCE ON THE PART OF THE GOP TO ATTACK A FELLOW
MILITARY GOVERNMENT FOR BEING INVOLVED WITH UNITED BRANDS
IN A QUESTIONABLE MANNER, AND (3) THE QUESTION OF CORRUPTION IN
"REFORMIST" MILITARY GOVERNMENTS MAY STRIKE TOO CLOSE TO HOME FOR
GOP COMFORT.
DEAN

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